

11656: f. 68

THE

SIDDONIA:

A

CHARACTERISTIC POEM.



T H E

Young (Thomas)
re

S I D D O N I A D:

A

CHARACTERISTICAL AND CRITICAL

P O E M.

MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED TO THE

Honourable Mrs. O'NEIL.

BARDLINGS too often, in Poetic Dreams,
Attempt, unequally, the highest Themes.

D U B L I N:

Printed and Sold by R. MARCHBANK, No. 11, New Buildings, Dame-street.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.



TO THE
H O N O U R A B L E
MRS. O ' N E I L.

M A D A M,

THE slightest offerings gain value from intentional respect, and efficacy from indulgent reception ; candid judgment and refined taste, such as you are generally and happily acknowledged to possess, will condescendingly admit them ; casting a humane veil over any passages inadequate ; of which I apprehend many ; or erroneous.

Under this idea my slight poetical semblance of a justly celebrated Actress waits your indulgent acceptance, whose favourable opinion and peculiar patronage has much enhanced, and firmly established a public sanction, obtained by the powerful ORIGINALITY of

B

Mrs.

Mrs. SIDDONS; whose excellent delineations of Nature do her abilities and your judgment the highest honour.

The Author in this Address, which possesses more truth, consequently less flattery than most of a similar nature; having, perhaps, stepped a little too forward in offering so light a tribute of respect; diffidently retires; venturing only to subscribe himself,

With the greatest respect,

MADAM,

Your most obedient,

And very humble servant,

No. 8, COLLEGE-GREEN,
AUGUST 1784.

THOMAS YOUNG.



T H E

S I D D O N I A D.

FIT to my Theme, kind Inspiration fall!
A CHURCHILL's sweetness, not a CHURCHILL's gall;
Oh! let me, void of prejudice in praise,
Make HONEST TRUTH the standard of my lays;
Which, tho' not told with energy of thoughts; 5
Shall shade, like CHARITY, a world of faults.

From blissful regions, from Elysium's grove,
Where souls of all the great departed rove,
Breath air ambrosial! from nectareous streams,
Amidst the shine of never-setting beams; 10
Where

Where miseries of all complexions cease,
And gracious entrance is the bond of peace.

Where spicy Gales wing unembitter'd hours,
And waft seraphic sweets of countless flowers ;
Where tempests rage not, nor loud thunders roar ; 15
Nor foaming torrents undulate the shore ;
Where malice, envy, discontent, nor strife,
Could e'er intrude, as in terrestrial life.

HOME ! SOUTHERNE ! CONGREVE ! OTWAY !

CIBBER ! MOORE !

With filial eyes review their parent shore ; 20
For e'en mortality cannot remove,
Much less extinguish PATRIOTIC love---
We mean that love which never can be bought ;
By Nature planted ; and by Reason taught ;



Not

Not the pretence which babbling int'rest makes, 25
 When paltry games are play'd for paltry stakes ;
 But that fair flow'r which wears eternal bloom,
 And issues fragrance from a CHATHAM's TOMB.

SHAKESPEARE, we chuse to introduce alone,
 That vast Monopolist of Nature's throne ; 30
 Who greater wealth than either INDIA's brought,
 From his unbounded treasury of thought.
 Immortal bard ; all hail ! may every spring
 Around thy tomb the nymphs of Avon bring ;
 Around, ye grateful nymphs, around him tread, 35
 Record his beauties and bemoan him dead ;
 Once more all hail ! come join the laurell'd band,
 And grasp soft SOUTHERNE with a friendly hand ;
 SOUTHERNE, whose MUSE deep-vers'd in tragic art,
 Second to none, but SHAKESPEARE ; fways the heart.

Still truly nervous in a tragic flow,
 As graceful THOMSON, and as golden ROWE.

Still they survive dramatic authors crown'd,
 With affluence of praise, their temples bound ;
 With verdant wreaths of ever blooming bays, 45
 Which vegetate from genius teeming lays ;
 Survive they will the unsparing tooth of time,
 Till SIDDONS reaches their celestial clime.
 Then shall MELPOMENE ! fresh sorrows steep,
 And e'en THALIA mournful vigils keep ; 50
 Her fall ! from all soft sympathy shall win,
 Save whimmy proselytes of HARLEQUIN,
 That rainbow sprite of ITALY and FRANCE ;
 Who captivates with gestures, jumps, and dance ;
 Without, save nimbleness, the least pretence, 55
 Alike the foe of PATHOS, WIT, and SENSE.

The

The drama droop—its scenic ardor fail ;
Of injur'd nature but a slight retail.

Soft ! are not feelings liable to shame,
That join buffoonery to SIDDONS name. 60
'Tis but a compliment we pay the AGE,
Which favours such conjunctions on the STAGE ;
Admitting BARNY BRITTLE's comic sway,
To laugh the finer feelings quite away.

PASSIONS will weep their excellence decay'd, 65
And TIME lament the ravage he has made.

On this prophetic melancholy view
'Tis fit we pause---and render worth its due ;
Its due !---presuming MUSE ! thy weakness own,
SIDDONS ! can show, a SIDDONS worth alone ; 70
Yet

Yet may I paint, in humble rhymes, a part,
Of strong sensations, which possess my heart;
Feelings, which up to all ideas rise,
And call forth dewy praise from countless eyes.

CHELT'NHAM * we thank thee, and revere thy name,
Which gave such merit!---leading stamp of fame. 76

And thee, O'NEAL!---with finest feelings blest!
Angelic treasure of a beauteous breast!
A SACRED FOUNT! whence richer treasures flow,
Than SPANISH PRIDE, or tyranny can owe, 80
To pale PERU---or tawny MEXICO!
Applausively we hail thy CRITIC choice,
So justly sanction'd by the PUBLIC voice.

Tho' sunk the DRAMA, in a languid AGE;
To THEE we owe a renovated STAGE. 85
If

* A town in Gloucestershire.

If MATCHLESS MERIT then can please and charm !
 You taught the sun of SIDDONS first to warm :
 From rusticated clouds you brought her forth ;
 Bright as the STAR, that issues from the NORTH !
 VIGOUR she caught ; and LUSTRE from YOUR praise ;
 SHE furnish'd LIGHT—you spread it to a blaze. 91

Where is the bosom SIDDONS can't inspire,
 With ZARA's sorrow ; or with ZARA's fire ?
 We mean *that* ZARA—toss'd on Fortune's tide—
 Who proudly rivals CONGREVE'S MOURNING BRIDE ;
 Nor less attractive is the melting Fair, 96
 Chang'd to the CHRISTIAN ZARA of VOLTAIRE !

When subtle GLOSTER, vers'd in sanguine art,
 By threats and promises to sway her heart,
 Endeavours SHORE's assistance to obtain, 100
 Against the royal orphan and his reign ;

Such lightning flashes from her angry eyes ;
 Such powerful accents, from her bosom rise ;
 Warm sympathy asserts in loud applause,
 The ACTRESS' merit—and the ORPHAN's cause. 105
 Boundless distress of complicated kind,
 A starving body and afflicted mind ;
 The melting features of a palid face,
 The feeble stagger, and the falt'ring pace,
 Thro' languor show incomparable grace. 110
 This melting view so highly SIDDONS paints,
 Attention languishes, and feeling faints.

In ISABELLA, sympathy must move !
 Maternal fondness—matrimonial love :
 And call a pang into that guilty mind,
 That either is adult'rate or unkind ,
 To love ungrateful ; and to duty blind.

But

But well may *she assume* sensations here,
 Who dignifies her state in PRIVATE sphere,
 The WIFE unblemish'd, and the MOTHER dear. 120
 'Tis FICTION which commands our stage applause,
 Practice in private life adorns her cause.
 Such SIDDONS is indeed! and who can guard
 Their inmost soul when SIDDONS plies it hard.

Hence in most high distinction is she seen, 125
 The VIRTUOUS FAV'RITE of a VIRTUOUS QUEEN ;
 That sacred character which nations love,
 And *dissipated* greatness must approve.

When CONSTANCE, mad with wrongs, our tears
 demands,
 Plaudits assume the eyes and quit the hands ; 130
 SIDDONS of Nature the successful thief,
 Exhausts the *springful* treasury of grief ;

Unlocks each nicer feeling of the soul,
 While globul'd drops o'er fairest faces roll;
 In piteous course o'er beauty's damask glow, 135
 Which thro' the glist'ning dew gains richer show;
 Sensation yields to her its tend'rest parts,
 And strikes a mournful unison of hearts.

When BEVERLY's rash fate she's fix'd to weep,
 (Whose passions revel, while his virtues sleep;) 140
 To mark each change, pathetically just,
 Which feeling, we confess, and feel we must;
 Th' arresting sympathy o'erflows each mind,
 And makes the cruel momentar'ly kind.

When glimm'ring *hope* comes tremblingly in fight,
 With what profusion does she paint delight? 146
 But when despondence of her erring mate,
 Consigns him to irrevocable fate;

A fate

A fate most lamentably black to sense,
 As SELF DESTRUCTION claims no just defence. 150
 When the fell poison finishes its task,
 Restricted melancholy drops its mask ;
 Such inexpressible !---such pungent woe !---
 None but a SIDDONS could its features show ;
 Whose marking eye gives energy to thought, 155
 That Nature starts at merit she has wrought.

Whilst ANJOU'S MARG'RET pillars FRANKLIN'S
 name,
 Her tow'ring soul swell'd with ambitious aim ;
 With smooth dissimulation dark and deep,
 Lulls just suspicion of her foes asleep ; 160
 Perilous picture of a summer storm,
 That darts blue flame ere clouds the sky deform ;
 And bears on fiery wings with lightning's speed,
 Destruction swift, as APOLLONIAN steed.

When by false league and vanquish'd arms o'er-
thrown, 165

Distraction rends her for a murder'd son ;
A son ! bright source of most vindictive pain,
A son by ROYALIZ'D ASSASSINS slain.

When WARWICK faint-quick pants expiring breath,
And EDWARD meets, in agonies of death ; 170
What AUDITOR can sit exempt from care,
When exclamation cries, " look there ! look there !"
Her eyes dart vengeance of superior kind,
Vast as her wrongs, and mighty as her mind.

In TOWNLY elegance politely charms, 175
The levity must please, the serious warms ;
Not flippant levity which wanting grace,
Suits but the limits of a COMIC face ;

Such

Such levity may tickle vulgar life,
But ill befits a TOWNLY's splendid wife.

180

DISCRIMINATION is the critic test,
Who understand their characters the best :
This is allow'd by simpleton and sage,
The best CRITERION to adjudge the STAGE.
Action, transitions ; attitudes remain ;
Tho' graceful, but a secondary train ;
Reason applauds—bids penitence be blest,
That flows so forcibly from SIDDONS' breast.

185

“ Ye giddy group of fashionable wives,
“ That in continued riot waste your lives,
“ Did ye—excuse the candour of a friend—
“ But see the direful dæmons which ascend ;
“ Which at the elbow of each gamester stand,
“ And ev'ry impulse of the mind command ;

190

“ The

" The midnight spectres which surround your chairs ;
 " Rage reddens here—there avarice despairs :— 196
 " You'd rush for shelter where contentment lies,
 " And court domestic blessings ye despise."

Suppose affection lost to moral duty,
 'Tis trite, but true, LATE HOURS are foes to BEAUTY.

When by LOTHARIO's gallantry betray'd, 201
 CALISTA is no more a virtuous maid ;
 Deepest compunction flows in ev'ry line,
 While looks tempestuous happily combine ;
 Pale-ey'd remorse so blanches o'er each cheek, 205
 E'en taunting prudes her lapse in LETHE steep :
 Such PENITENCE must make all errors ev'n,
 For PENITENCE ON EARTH is JOY in HEAV'N !

Permit, O MUSE—permission me to court,
 All that can move! awaken! fire! transport! 210
 Th' arousing thunder of the PATRIOT GREEK! *
 Whom thousands heard with pliant rapture speak:
 Who struck more terror into PHILIP's † mind,
 Than could in war arm'd millions of mankind.
 The ROMAN ORATOR ‡ so form'd to please, 215
 With nervous dignity---pathetic ease;
 And both these blended in ISOCRATES.

All I invoke—ideas boldly wing—
 Lend me, O JEPHSON! genial pow'rs to sing;
 Teach me on tragic feelings to refine, 220
 In numbers elegant and just as thine;
 So shall I be more equal to my theme,
 And prove in substance, what I now but seem.

* DEMOSTHENES.

† Of MACEDON.

‡ CICERO.

Let me, by thy imagination taught,
 Range the rich region of exalted thought! 225
 To sound EUPHRASIA'S *—that's SIDDONIAN praise;
 A subject worthy of sublimest lays.
 She nobly wins the emulative prize,
 When by her dagger DIONYSIUS dies:
 A daughter's arm tyrannic progress checks, 230
 And eminently tow'rs above her sex;
 EVANDER whom her filial breast sustains,
 Once more is rescu'd from oppressive chains;
 Our ADMIRATION! fascinated feels,
 While blushing ENVY! MATCHLESS MERIT seals. 235
 But wordy efforts feebly must rehearse,
 Such excellence as shames the powers of verse.

Mild BELVIDERA whelm'd with painful wrong,
 Melts in each cadence of her plaintive tongue.

REMEMBER TWELVE ! all imagery must fail--- 240
 With two soft words she weighs down merit's scale ;
 And casts a look so virtuously kind,
 'Tis Nature glowing from a faithful mind.

But ah ! what change to melancholy gloom,
 When the discover'd plot brings racking doom 245
 On hapless JAFFIER, and his gallant friend,
 Then frantic feelings mad ideas blend :
 All wish from deepest wretchedness to save,
 When strong affliction sinks her to the grave.
 Struck thro', by fancied shades, her swelling heart 250
 Yields to the stroke of death's relieving dart ;
 For we must estimate *that* death a friend,
 Which gives to griefs, like hers, a balmy end.

'Tis thine t' illuminate EACH POET's song, 265
 In fancy delicate ; in judgment strong ;

With native force, with unaffected ease,
 To form the yielding passions as you please ;
 To place each character in proper light,
 To speak their words and do their meaning right, 270
 And give the world of reason unconfin'd delight.

We mean not to MELPOMENE alone,
 Confine our thoughts, NEXT is THALIA'S THRONE ;
 Who's SPORTIVE TROOP can never fail to please, 256
 Led on by DALY's sprightliness and ease ;
 So just, so unconfin'd, her COMIC powers,
 We LAUGH by MINUTES, and DELIGHT by HOURS.

Let not th' UNMENTIONED drama's daughters fair,
 Pale, BLOOMING CHEEKS, with quick resentive care,
 EACH and her SONS SHALL severally share.
 A future day, and future work shall view,
 And render MERIT what is MERIT'S due.

*Since this POEM was begun, Mrs. SIDDONS's severe
Illness occasions the following :*

HEAR, O HYGEIA ! hear a Muse's pray'r,
And make a SIDDONS thy peculiar care !
Should ought disabling blight her TRAGIC pow'rs,
MELPOMENE must pass neglected hours :
The trait of character, the pomp of verse,
Must pageant forth a figurative hearse,
And the NINE MUSES, at Apollo's call,
Stand forth supporters of the fancied pall.
Genius with head on swelling breast reclin'd,
And fancy tear-fill'd, meltingly behind ;
As Nature must confess a falling world,
When ATOMS all are in confusion hurl'd.

We mean not by assimilation here,
To equalize the transient mimic sphere,
But take th' undoubted liberty of lays,
To catch some glow of animated praise ;
So must the Stage its representative,
To a lost SIDDONS equal feelings give.



F I N I S.